

SHOOTING OF PEGGY MARSH'S HUSBAND STILL A MYSTERY; JACK CLIFFORD TELLS PART HE PLAYED IN STRANGE DRAMA

DISTRICT ATTORNEY DECLARES BULLET FIRED IN ACCIDENT

But State Trooper A. F. Boyce Points Out Many Discrepancies in the Testimony of Witnesses to the Shooting—Pistol Mysteriously Disappeared With Garment of Wounded Man as the Inquiry Continued.

PLATTSBURG, Sept. 30. At the end of a week's intensive investigation by public officials and private interests, the shooting of Albert L. Johnson, the aviator, husband of Peggy Marsh, the bizarre dancer, remains as deep a mystery as ever.

From the beginning the case has been surrounded by a veritable entanglement of contradictory testimony, so dense that District Attorney Harold A. Jerry, of Clinton county, has not been able to penetrate it.

He stated today that he had found no real evidence to show that an attempt had been made to murder Johnson nor anything to indicate that the shot that nearly cost the youth his life was fired with suicidal intent.

Jack Clifford, husband of Evelyn Nesbit; Peggy Marsh, whose suit against the Field estate made her famous, and Johnson himself, who adopted her child after he married the young woman, have been questioned. Yet the prosecutor is still

cause me to be far from satisfied. In the first place, Johnson told me that he shot himself with Jack Clifford's gun and his wife said the same thing.

"Yesterday Clifford was positive that Johnson himself owned the weapon with which he had been shot."

CAST OF NOTED CHARACTERS IN AMAZING "ACCIDENT" IN WILDERNESS



Peggy Marsh and Buday



Albert Johnson



Harold A. Jerry,
Dist. Atty.



Ann Luther



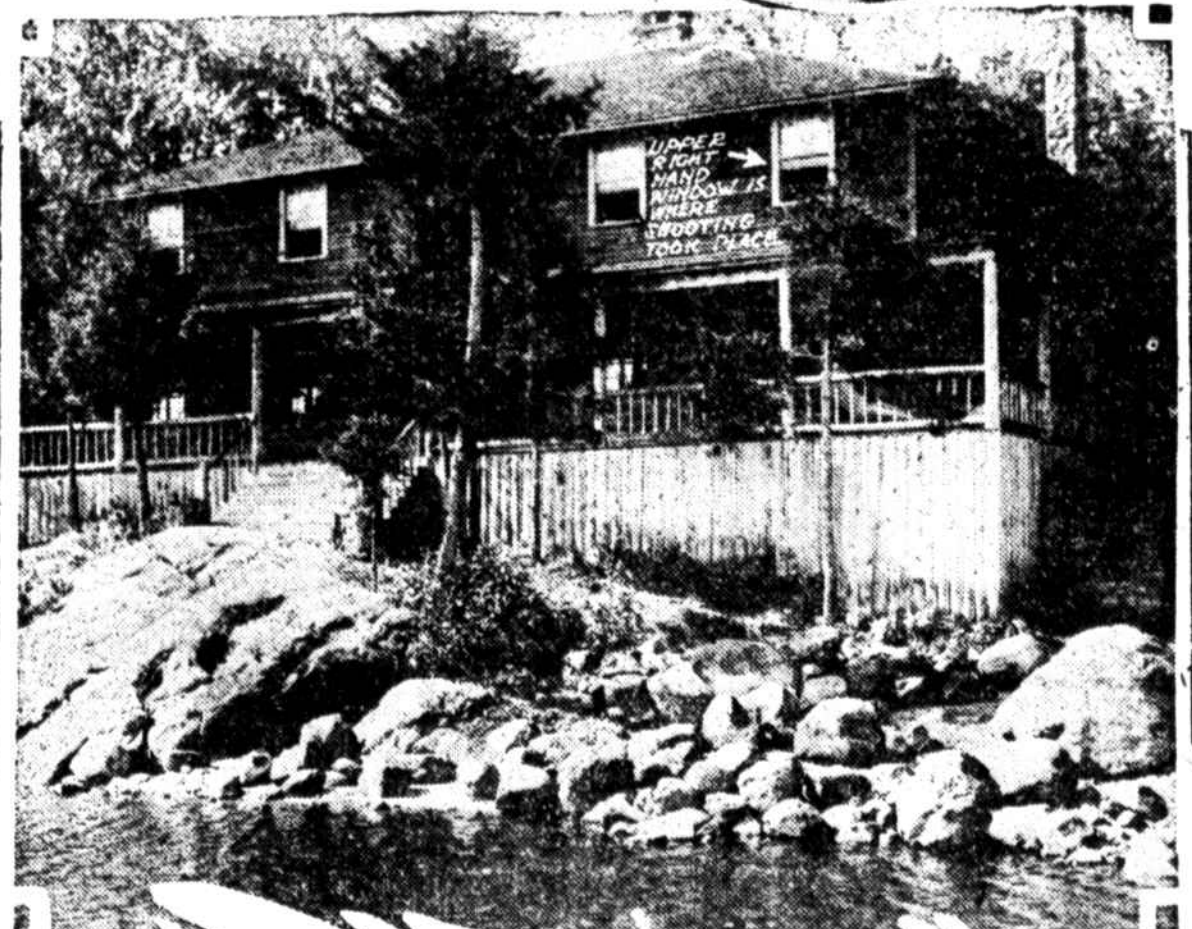
Jack Clifford



Sgt. A. F. Boyce



Peggy Marsh
and Son Tony



Jack's Lodge - Chateaugay

ROWED FOR LIFE—Jack Clifford, husband of Evelyn Nesbit, rowed the boat across the lake with the doctor, then helped convey Albert L. Johnson, the wounded man, to the hospital.

trying to iron out the discrepancies in the various statements.

For there are important discrepancies in the testimony of several witnesses already examined, discrepancies that are wholly incompatible with exact truth. Further there is a pronounced anxiety on the part of all directly concerned to suppress the details of the affair as far as possible and to prevent publicity being given the various persons who were present at the party that preceded the shooting.

JUST TWO PRESENT.

Peggy Marsh and "Buddie" Johnson were rounding out their runaway honeymoon at the Clifford camp on Lake Chateaugay when the pistol was discharged, sending a bullet through the bridegroom's intestines which passed through his body.

It was announced emphatically that Clifford, who is still the husband of Evelyn Nesbit, despite long-drawn divorce litigation, was not at "Camp Jack," and that Peggy and Buddie were the only persons who witnessed the shooting.

Later it was brought out that Clifford was there, conspicuously there, and that there were several other notables on Broadway who were also present. Sgt. A. F. Boyce, of the State constabulary, who is assisting the prosecuting officer's inquiry, uncovered other important facts which still call for explanation. When he called for the shirt which Johnson had worn he was told that it had been torn up for bandages. When he asked for the pistol from which the bullet had been discharged, he was told that a maid had taken it away, but the maid told him that the weapon had not been removed by her from the lodge.

THE SERGEANT SUSPICIOUS.

Here is the way Sergeant Boyce expressed his suspicions after four days' investigation:

"Amazing conflict in statements have developed in this case which

"Then Peggy Marsh gave me two versions of how the shooting took place. Once she said that her husband had accidentally pulled the trigger. Afterward she said that the gun had been discharged as the result of being dropped.

HARD TO GET FACTS.

"We had difficulty in getting to talk with the members of the Johnson family at all. They are very reticent. Mrs. Johnson, the wounded man's mother, and Thomas Johnson, his brother, are here. The authorities at the Champlain Valley Hospital are also reluctant to talk and to permit us to carry on our investigation.

"We have definitely determined that it was Jack Clifford himself who made the dash across the lake in a motorboat to call Dr. Thurber from Brainardville immediately after the shooting. This is in the face of the statement by Peggy Marsh that an unknown camp attendant made the trip.

After taking the physician across the lake in the motorboat, Clifford became lost in the fog, and finally they had to abandon the launch and take a rowboat.

"Dr. Thurber, when interrogated as to the condition of the wound, said that Clifford, being well versed in medical matters, had cleaned the wound with iodine, and if there had been any powder burns about the entrance wound they were not present when he examined the patient.

CLIFFORD'S ACTIONS.

"The next morning, when the party was ready to start for Plattsburg with Johnson, Clifford accompanied them as far as Merrill's Landing, where a trail leads away from the lake toward civilization. Why he didn't come all the way into Plattsburg with the injured man he has failed to explain.

"We were told, however, that nobody except Mrs. Johnson heard the shot, and that the resultant confusion had led some of the other occupants of the lodge to

THE SUSPICIOUS SERGEANT—A. F. Boyce, of the State police, who has pointed out contradictions and discrepancies in the testimony of witnesses to the shooting that are still unexplained.

believe that a family altercation was in progress.

"The only person that we have identified in the group that rushed to Johnson's aid after the shot was fired is Charles H. Bacon, a Plattsburgh business man, who was either a guest at the Clifford lodge or who had a cabin near by. He was supposed to be staying at Lake Chateaugay for his nerves.

"We also discovered the name of Mrs. Johnson's maid, despite certain efforts to keep it quiet. She is Olive Sherringham, of New York city, and she has been acting as governess to little Tony Marsh, Peggy's son."

Now, in sharp contrast at many points to the sergeant's statement, here is the story that Peggy Marsh told at the bedside of her wounded husband the day after the shooting.

She was attending him as nurse and often he interrupted her with a gesture. She was nervous, distraught from the excitement of the affair at least and physically exhausted nearly, but she did not hesitate as she gave this explanation of the shooting:

"My husband has told me exactly how the shooting occurred. Heretofore my idea of the whole thing had been hazy and I had

been too distracted to think coherently.

"Albert and I came up here Thursday afternoon from New York. Our little son, Tony, was with us, as were several of my personal attendants.

"There were no other guests at the Clifford lodge. Jack was not there, either. We had merely leased the place for a few weeks' outing.

"We had been there earlier in the season, but had returned to New York for my dancing engagement, leaving Tony at the camp. Albert returned two weeks ago, but came down for me last Monday

and we arrived at the camp again on Thursday. It was so far from civilization that we contemplated a complete rest.

"Shortly after we got there, Albert took a Colt revolver belonging to Clifford, and we were shooting at bottles in the yard. Then he went to his room and got a Smith & Wesson revolver of his own. He continued to use the Smith & Wesson, while I turned my attention to other things.

THE TWO WEAPONS.

"Albert finally went into the house and cleaned and oiled the Smith & Wesson revolver. He placed five shells in the chambers,

leaving the sixth chamber of the cylinder empty for the hammer to rest on.

"Now, it seems as though the cylinders of the Colt guns revolve in an opposite direction from those of the Smith & Wesson guns. The Smith & Wesson cylinder turns from left to right, clockwise, and the Colt gun in the other direction.

"Albert was used to the Colt. As he tried to turn the empty chamber under the hammer, he got mixed, and, instead swung a loaded chamber under the firing pin.

"He was all the while holding

his finger on the trigger—a foolish thing to do. I entered the room at that moment, accompanied by one of the attaches of the place, whose name I do not know. The latter was going to perform some slight service for me.

THE GUN IS FIRED.

"We opened the door just in time to see a blinding flash, and my husband sank to the floor with blood spurting from his side. I fainted instantly, and I afterward learned that the attendant carried me to sofa and then ran to the aid of Albert.

"Albert was bleeding profusely and getting weaker. We tied the wound and the attendant took a motor boat and started across the lake and tried to get Dr. Thurber. Albert was in such pain that he would lose consciousness for a time and then come back.

"The man reached Dr. Thurber's lodge and they started back immediately. As evening came on, a heavy fog settled over the small lake.

"I sat there trying to ease Albert's pain, but having small luck. He was beginning to bleed again, and I thought several times that he was dying.

"Far off in the fog we could hear the put-put-put of the motorboat, but it never seemed to get any closer. Then the boat's exhaust died away and we couldn't hear it. It was dark by this time.

"An hour later, Dr. Thurber and the man arrived in a row boat. They had become lost in the fog and instead of making our landing in the motorboat, they had cruised clear around the lake and finally grounded the boat in a weed bank, near Thurber's place. They waded ashore and took the rowboat.

LONG DELAY DANGEROUS.

"Dr. Thurber quickly gave Albert narcotics to kill the pain and applied first-aid treatment. The lake was getting rough on account of the wind and the fog still obscured portions of the water.

"We did not dare start for town with Albert until the lake quieted. All that time he was barely alive and we prayed that the waters would calm so that we could start.

"It was not until after daybreak Friday that we set out in the rowboat for Thurber's home, from from which a rough trail leads to Plattsburg. We had Albert tied

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